

### **REMARKS**

Claims 11-19 stand rejected; claims 11-16, 48 and 49 have been amended; and claim 50 has been added. Claims 11-19 and 48-50 remain pending in the application.

Claims 11-19 have been rejected as anticipated in view of U.S. Patent 6,331,492 to Misium, et al. ("Misium"). Applicant requests reconsideration of these rejections.

For a reference to anticipate a claim, the reference must teach every element of the claim (MPEP §2131, 8<sup>th</sup> Ed.). The cited reference does not teach or suggest all of the elements of the pending claims.

Claim 11 has been amended and as amended recites a method of forming a nitrogen enriched region within a silicon oxide containing layer that includes providing a silicon-oxide-containing layer having a bare upper surface and exposing the silicon-oxide-containing layer to an activated nitrogen species to form a nitrogen-enriched region. Claim 11 further recites, in pertinent part, thermally annealing the nitrogen within the nitrogen-enriched region, while the bare upper surface of the silicon-oxide-containing layer remains bare, to bond at least some of the nitrogen to silicon proximate the nitrogen. Claim 11 is allowable for at least the reason that it recites thermally annealing the nitrogen within the nitrogen-enriched region, while the bare upper surface of the silicon-oxide-containing layer remains bare, to bond at least some of the nitrogen to silicon proximate the nitrogen.

Misium, as shown in Figs. 1B and 2B, describes methods for preparing a nitrided layer 22 on the entire surface of a silicon dioxide layer 12 for the purpose of rendering the silicon dioxide layer resistant to etch chemistries. Misium further describes the formation of a photoresist layer 14 and its patterning to cover a portion of nitrided layer

22 as shown in Fig 2C. Misium then describes annealing before photoresist layer 14 is patterned or before subsequent etching. The cited reference does not teach or suggest thermally annealing the nitrogen within the nitrogen-enriched region, while the bare upper surface of the silicon-oxide-containing layer remains bare, to bond at least some of the nitrogen to silicon proximate the nitrogen.

For at least the reason that the cited reference does not teach or suggest thermally annealing the nitrogen within the nitrogen-enriched region, while the bare upper surface of the silicon-oxide-containing layer remains bare, to bond at least some of the nitrogen to silicon proximate the nitrogene, claim 11 is allowable.

Claims 12-19, 48, and 49 depend from claim 11 and are therefore allowable for at least the reasons discussed above regarding claim 11.

New claim 50 has been added. New claim 50 depends from claim 11 and is therefore allowable for at least the reasons discussed above regarding claim 11.


No new matter has been added by the amendment of the pending claims or the addition of the new claim. The amendments and the new claim are supported by the disclosure at, for example, Fig. 3 and page 6 of the specification.

Applicant also submits herewith a supplemental information disclosure statement.

Claims 11-19, 48, and 49 have been amended; new claim 50 has been added; and a supplemental information disclosure statement has been submitted. Applicant requests allowance of claims 11-19 and 48-50 in the Examiner's next action.

Respectfully submitted,

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